

Washington, D.C. Congressman Sanford Bishop last night participated in a bi-partisan effort to defeat an amendment to the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill that would have cut funding for the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) and severely crippled the Fort Benning-based program. Congressman James McGovern (D-MA) sponsored the amendment which was narrowly defeated by a vote of 214-203.

Bishop, whose district includes Fort Benning, said, "Since I entered Congress in 1993 this important program has been under attack. However, I believe WHINSEC is of vital importance to our national security interests and is a unique, creative, and powerful tool in preserving democracy and fighting the Global War on Terror. Last night's vote exemplifies the continued bi-partisan support of WHINSEC and I am particularly pleased and grateful to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for supporting the continuation of the program."

As it became clear that the amendment would be supported by a majority of Republicans, Bishop worked with key House Democratic leaders, including members of both the House Armed Services and Appropriations Committees, to secure the necessary Democratic votes to ensure its defeat. Almost every year since Bishop has been in Congress, cuts to WHINSEC have been proposed, and each time the efforts have failed.

WHINSEC offers Spanish-language education and training for Latin American military and law-enforcement personnel. In 2001 the program underwent structural accountability and the curriculum was overhauled to place increased focus on human rights, ethics and democracy training. Today WHINSEC graduates approximately 800 -1000 military officers each year.